

Mercury is toxic.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that can be toxic to humans and wildlife. When products containing mercury are broken, or thrown in the trash, outdoors, or down drains, the mercury can pollute our environment and contaminate many kinds of fish. You and your family can be exposed to mercury by breathing its fumes, eating mercury contaminated fish or touching spilled mercury. Follow these tips to protect the environment and reduce your exposure to mercury.

Learn what items in your home contain mercury.

Mercury is found in many common products such as thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent bulbs and switches. The button batteries found in your calculators, watches and hearing aids may contain mercury. It is also found in cylindrical batteries made before 1990. Even some topical disinfectants, contact lens solutions and detergents contain mercury.

Never put mercury-containing items in the trash, outdoors or down drains.

When products that contain mercury are thrown away, they end up at landfills, incinerators or waste water treatment plants where the mercury can enter the environment. Many cities and towns collect mercury-containing items at their household hazardous waste collection centers or one-day events. Call your town or 1-866-9MERCURY to find out more.

Never touch or vacuum spilled mercury.

If you spill mercury or break a mercury-containing item, do not touch the mercury. Keep all people and pets out of the area and open windows to ventilate the area. Call 1-866-9MERCURY or visit www.state.ma.us/envir/mercury.htm for cleanup and disposal suggestions. Never vacuum or sweep the spill. This will spread the mercury around your home and contaminate your vacuum or broom.

Try to buy products containing little or no mercury.

Minimize your use of products that contain mercury to reduce the amount of mercury that could enter the environment. Choose alternatives such as digital thermometers or mercury-free thermostats. Though all fluorescent bulbs contain mercury, they offer the environmental benefit of energy efficiency. Do not put burned out or broken bulbs in your trash or recycling container. Dispose of them at a household hazardous waste collection program.

Be aware of fish consumption advisories.

Eating fish contaminated with mercury can harm you and your family. Almost half of the lakes, ponds and rivers tested in Massachusetts have some types of fish that are unsafe to eat due to mercury contamination. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has issued advisories to warn people about eating certain fish from these waterbodies. In addition, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued advisories for some saltwater fish. Fish is an important part of a diet which can lead to improved nutrition and better health. Just be sure to learn which fish are best to eat. Call 1-866-9MERCURY for details.

Stop mercury from rising.

Brought to you by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Department of Environmental Protection.

1-866-9MERCURY 1-866-963-7287

